

(U) "Ask Zelda!": "Double Commuters" Attacked by Bear

FROM: "Zelda," Dispenser of Advice on Workplace Issues

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(U//FOUO) Editor's intro: This month's Zelda column isn't really about parking -- it's about how to respond when people are not polite. However, since the subject of parking is raised, I wanted to mention that updated advice on parking from I&L was published on *SIDtoday* recently (see it [here](#)). It recommends that **Big 4** employees park in the NBP316 garage if the airplane, Colony 7, and Bravo lots are full... (The below letter was written before this updated guidance was posted.) Now back to our column, which is unclassified in its entirety:



Dear Zelda,

This morning around 0930 while waiting with a number of other people for the shuttle in front of R&E a woman walking into the building addressed the group saying "I hope somebody parks in front of your driveway so you can't get into your house." We were all too dumbfounded to respond.

I normally work at the Big 4 complex, as do at least 3 of other people in the group. We had been lamenting the fact that we couldn't find parking in front of our buildings or in the airplane lot, or in the museum lot or in the Bravo lot, and how that added 30 to 40 minutes more to our commute AFTER we arrived on base. I don't think that this lady heard much of our conversation, but somehow the idea of people who didn't work at R&E parking there offended her deeply. How is one supposed to respond to such naked aggression at work? It's not like we wanted to drive around parking lots for 20+ minutes only to have to board a shuttle to get to work.

Signed,
Hoofing it to Headquarters

Dear Unhappy Hooper,

WHAT??!! I am appalled. This woman was obviously raised by bears. The parking situation sure brings out the worst in people. But I think you and the other "double commuters" responded correctly -- by not saying anything at all.

Naked aggression like that will not be calmed by defending yourself with an explanation of your exhaustive parking search. And if you "turn the other cheek" and wish the person a nice day, it will come off sounding sarcastic. Things will certainly escalate if you throw back a zinger, although it may make you and the others who were verbally attacked by her feel better. I'll bet that not even apologizing would make a difference. So there you have it. Silence is the only option.

One thing you can do is **manage your response**. Stay calm and don't let this stranger push your buttons. She may have behaved like a boor, but you don't have to stoop to her level.

If this had been someone you knew, or if she had stopped and expected a response, you might have

tried something like this. Say, "I'm sorry you're so upset.[1] I'm upset, too.[2]" Then briefly explain your search through various lots before finally parking in "hers." [3] Close by saying, "I hope something changes soon. This is frustrating **for all of us** who come in later than [*fill in the time*].[4]"

This will serve several purposes:

1. acknowledge her feelings,
2. establish rapport ("we're in this together"),
3. tell your side, and
4. reinforce rapport (without promising any action on your part).

Sadly, there seems to be an epidemic of people behaving badly nowadays. Even the cute little birds in our **video games** exhibit angry and aggressive behavior! Things have gotten so bad that NSA is launching a *Civility Matters* campaign this spring.* (Apparently people aren't learning good manners as a child anymore.) Look for coming announcements and events to learn what you can do to foster an atmosphere of courtesy and respect in the workplace. Ultimately, it's preferable to prevent aggressive behavior rather than figure out how to respond to it.

I only hope NSA's campaign is more successful than the "Choose Civility" project in Howard County, Maryland -- the goal of which is to position the county as a model of civility and to enhance respect, empathy, consideration and tolerance. I believe their campaign has been moderately effective; wherever you go in Howard County you can see green and white "Choose Civility" bumper stickers on the backs of minivans... right after they cut you off in traffic.

Zelda

(U) Notes:

* (~~U//FOUO~~) Editor's comment: An Agency-all about the civility campaign came out after Zelda penned the above, but before this column was posted. You can find it **here**.

(~~U//FOUO~~) Do you have thoughts on this topic? Post them on the **related Tapioca Pebble**.

(U) Standard disclaimer: "Zelda's" views are her own and do not represent the official views of the Associate Directorate for Corporate Leadership, Human Resources, SID, or any other NSA organization.
